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ABSTRACT

In early 1984, Connecticut's state board of education adopted an agenda of seven major initiatives for improving the quality of education in the state. Each initiative was further broken down into one or more specific issues. This document examines the background of each issue, presents recommendations for addressing the issue, discusses implementation of the recommendations, and comments on both the legislation that would be required and the costs and their implications. Issues in the area of improving teaching, the first initiative, include ensuring professional competence, attracting high quality staff members, strengthening professional preparation, updating certification regulations, improving retention of educators, and raising teachers' salaries. Early childhood education, the second initiative, faces such issues as providing equal access at an earlier age, determining when early education should begin, and reducing development of educational handicaps. A third initiative, improving educational assessment and assistance, requires knowing how to determine skill mastery after primary education, assisting students needing extra help, and helping districts reach goals. The fourth initiative, setting higher standards, involves ensuring depth and breadth in education and promoting policies that support learning. The final three initiatives focus on using time effectively for education, improving the delivery of vocational education, and improving educational opportunities for adults. (PGD)

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CONNECTICUT'S CHALLENGE:

AN AGENDA FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE

EA 017 276

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

JANUARY 1984

Connecticut's Challenge:

An Agenda for Educational
Equity and Excellence

Adopted by the
State Board of Education
5 January 1984

Members of the Board:

June K. Goodman, Chairwoman
James J. Szerejko, Vice Chairman
A. Walter Esdaile
Warren J. Foley
Roberto Fuentes
Abraham Glassman
Rita Hendel
John F. Mannix
Julia S. Rankin

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INTRODUCTION

Every school day in Connecticut, nearly a thousand public schools open their doors to approximately one half million children who have a constitutional right to learn. The students' right does not vary according to whether they live in a city, a suburb or a rural town, or whether the student speaks English or whether she or he is handicapped. Yet in Connecticut wide differences exist among educational opportunities for students living in different areas and coming from different backgrounds.

Many efforts have been made to improve our state's educational program. Often the results have been good. Six state schools were selected this year as among the 150 best in the nation by the U.S. Department of Education. A Manchester English teacher is the 1983 Teacher of the Year. Scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test for 1983 seniors rose for the second straight year in Connecticut, and the state distinguishes itself by having two thirds of those eligible take the SAT compared with an average of one third in other states. The rate of 1982 Connecticut graduates going on to some form of post-secondary education was the highest to date, 64 percent. And the state's share of the cost of education has risen steadily for the past several years.

But it is also true that there are indications we have not always succeeded in our attempts to reach our goals of educational equity and excellence. More than 600,000 adult state residents, or 30 percent of that population, do not have high school diplomas and thus face considerably harder tasks in finding jobs. Other statistics show that between 20 percent and 25 percent of Connecticut students lack basic academic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics. Often, such statistics reflect the great differences in the ability of local communities to meet their students' needs. Steadily increasing state funding has helped reduce the disparities, but Connecticut remains among the bottom seven states nationwide in its share of spending on education.

The picture of Connecticut's schools depends heavily on one's point of view, but all can agree that the quality of educational programs statewide is uneven. A successful educational system is the bedrock of a just society and a truly just system strives to reduce inequity. The state must take the lead in setting standards of achievement and supporting the attainment of those standards by all.

The following agenda represents a considered estimate of how to improve Connecticut's schools and takes into account numerous timely national and state studies. The initiatives presented here touch on many of the responsibilities of the State Board of Education. They include proposals on the following: stricter standards for high school graduation; changes in teacher preparation programs and certification requirements; better professional development; lowered mandatory school age; longer kindergarten classes; establishment of a mastery test in the fourth, sixth and eighth grades; improved remedial instruction; upgraded programs in vocational and adult education; and required local policies on homework and attendance.

The agenda contains recommendations for implementation in some areas and proposals for study in others. Proposals for study reflect not a lesser priority but a need for more information before policies can be set. Not all the recommendations require legislation, although most do. In the same vein, not all carry cost increases. There exists for several initiatives, however, a significant price tag. Cost estimates are provided to assist in deliberations, but they should be considered only as the roundest of figures, subject to change. The difficulty of making such calculations can be seen, for example, in the proposal to set new graduation requirements, where necessary changes in curriculum and staffing would be different in every district. Suggested implementation dates respond to concerns such as the need for program development, professional training, parent and community involvement and appropriating funds. The recommendations are presented separately for clarity, but the agenda must be seen as a whole. Each proposal, including those referred for study, represents one component of an integrated approach to educational improvement. The whole, as well as each of the parts, will suffer significantly if the agenda is not viewed as an integral package.

The key to the future of Connecticut's schools is the raising of standards and expectations. While this agenda charts the course, success will also depend upon changes in attitudes towards school and schooling.

Students need to know that they are expected to work hard at their studies. They must understand that an orderly school environment is as much their responsibility as it is of those who supervise them. Students should be secure in the knowledge that parents and teachers will be there to help. Most of all, students must know that whatever their career choices their schools will give them a sound foundation. Their diplomas will mean more because of standards they were required to meet.

Parents need to know that their children deserve a good education and that they, as parents, are a crucial component of the educational framework. They must make their expectations clear to their local boards of education by attending meetings, sharing concerns and watching for results. Most of all, they can provide support at home. Only parents can make sure their children get on the school bus in the morning and turn off the television when it's time to do homework. And parents should know that they, like all Connecticut adults, will be afforded meaningful opportunities to learn. Our schools are for everyone.

Teachers and administrators need to know that the work they do is important and worthy both of respect and respectable salaries. Our school professionals must be competent and accountable for the job done. This state's educators must be models -- not only of teaching, but of learning. Local boards of education should know that no matter how strong statewide standards may be, only local boards can translate those standards into reality.

The citizens of Connecticut need to know that strengthening our schools will take commitment. While students, parents and educators must do their part, so must the state. The investment will be expensive, but everyone will share in the benefits.

The need is now to set an agenda for Connecticut's public schools. The state must act to assure that all students learn and are taught with the same high expectations. The infrastructure of education is laid open in many critical reports. Connecticut and other states have already begun addressing certain issues; the time is ripe for action. If Connecticut hopes to maintain or improve the reputation of its educational system, it must point the way for its districts and help in the funding. It can only be said that until each student in each community is fluent in the elements of a well-rounded education, the challenge remains unmet.

INITIATIVE: IMPROVING TEACHING

ISSUE: HOW TO ENSURE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

BACKGROUND:

The professional competence of those entering and remaining in teaching has become a serious concern. Connecticut formed three study groups concerning the issue of professional competence in the summer of 1982.

The groups, consisting of representatives from business, industry, public and private sector agencies, higher education and elementary and secondary education, are called the Distinguished Citizens Task Force on Quality Teaching, The Committee on the Revision of Procedures and Standards for Teacher Preparation Program Approval and the Certification Advisory Council. Their charge has been to make recommendations on the actions needed to ensure that the most talented, sensitive and skillful individuals are attracted to, prepared and certified to work in education in Connecticut. A fourth group, the Professional Development Council, which was convened in 1981, was asked to continue its work under the charge to develop guidelines to help districts maintain highly competent professionals in their schools. Finally, the Teacher Examination Development Panel began its work in early 1983.

The issues and recommendations contained in this section summarize the reports from these groups. Most of the following proposals relate to administrators as well as teachers.

ISSUE: HOW TO ATTRACT HIGH QUALITY INDIVIDUALS TO EDUCATION

The report of the Distinguished Citizens Task Force on Quality Teaching included the following recommendations. While this report has not been adopted by the State Board of Education, many of its recommendations are related to the issues contained herein.

1. That teachers' starting salaries be made competitive with salaries earned by persons with comparable skills in the private sector.

2. That salaries of experienced teachers and administrators be comparable to those earned by individuals with similar training, experience and expertise in the private sector.

3. That the State Board of Education and local boards of education establish ladders that will recognize the expertise and performance of teachers.

4. That Connecticut school districts enact specific policies to encourage the retention of quality teachers, including summer work, flexible employment and benefit options, reduction of stressful conditions, and the return of retired teachers to the classroom.

5. That the State Board of Education, the Board of Governors of Higher Education, and local school boards provide funds to create or improve professional development programs for educational personnel.

6. That a statewide system of cooperative efforts between business and education be established to enrich the public school curriculum and to provide increased opportunities for the co-employment of teachers by the corporate sector and education.

7. That the State Board of Education, working cooperatively with the Board of Governors of Higher Education and with local school districts, take specific steps to attract academically superior high school and college students into the teaching profession and to provide them with teacher preparation programs of high quality.

8. That the State allocate resources for a public information campaign aimed at improving the public image of the teaching profession.

These recommendations provide the framework for specific responses to issues which must be addressed to improve teaching.

ISSUE: HOW TO STRENGTHEN THE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OF EDUCATORS

BACKGROUND:

The number of academically talented students entering the teaching profession continues to decline. In many instances, performance on college entrance examinations and grade point averages during the first two years of college indicate that more individuals entering teacher education programs today come from the lowest academic ranks at colleges and universities. Furthermore, many teacher training programs are criticized for poor curriculum, out-of-date training methods and lack of emphasis on important teaching competencies.

RECOMMENDATION:

To address these problems, the Committee on the Revision of Procedures and Standards has developed a set of procedures and standards to be used as the basis for evaluation of an institution's teacher preparation program. It is recommended that the State Board of Education accept the Committee's set of procedures and standards, which are based on the following assumptions: (a) that a teacher preparation program must provide rigorous background in one's chosen field, (b) that the program must prepare educators to meet the practical demands their positions will place upon them in the schools, (c) that the program must establish symbiotic relationships with the public schools, (d) that the program must be supported by its college or university, and (e) that entrance requirements must include an examination of competency in reading, writing and mathematics.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The Committee recommends phasing in its revised standards for teacher-preparation programs over the next two years. Most standards would take effect immediately because of their similarity to existing standards. Other standards, requiring more planning time and additional staff, would be implemented by December, 1984 and December, 1985 in two groups. Procedural changes would take effect by September, 1984.

LEGISLATION:

None is required.

COST:

This program would cost an estimated $1 million per year initially. Costs include the stipends for cooperating teachers, the expenses of evaluations and the cost of released time for higher education staff.

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEARS*

YEAR	INCREASED COSTS OVER PRIOR YEAR	TOTAL INCREASED COSTS SINCE 1983-84
1984-85	$ 1,000,000	$ 1,000,000
1985-86	50,000	1,050,000
1986-87	50,000	1,100,000
1987-88	60,000	1,160,000

*On this and all tables, estimates are rounded to the nearest $10,000. Annual cost increases are based on an assumed inflation rate of 5%. A description of the state/local share of costs is included in the summary cost table attached.

ISSUE: HOW TO UPDATE AND STRENGTHEN THE CERTIFICATION REGULATIONS

BACKGROUND:

The present system of certification does not address actual teaching competence or classroom performance. And it does not provide any incentive for ongoing or even periodic growth and renewal. In general, certification regulations bear only a tenuous relationship to the skills and personal qualities which enable effective teaching. Thus, what is needed is a certification process which will: (a) make certification more responsive to actual needs, (b) incorporate the demonstration of specific competencies into the certification process, (c) ensure ongoing, professional growth for all educational personnel, and (d) provide elements of a career ladder for teachers.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is proposed that, in accordance with the recommendations of the Certification Advisory Council, Connecticut's Teacher Certification Regulations be amended to provide for: (a) an initial certificate at the successful completion of a teacher preparation program and a subject matter competency examination, (b) a provisional certificate, valid for eight years, at the successful completion of a one-year beginning teacher support and assessment program, (c) a professional certificate at the successful completion of three years of teaching and 30 credits beyond the bachelor's degree in teaching-related courses, (d) the concept of continuing education tied to certification, and (e) the concept of a master teacher designation for teachers recognized as exemplary and superior. The revised regulations would also include provisions for alternate routes to initial and provisional certification.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Subject to regulatory revision. The Certification Advisory Council should be expanded to include two representatives of teacher organizations. The Council should review the specific requirements for the professional certificate, the concept of continuing education as tied to certification, and the master teacher concept and its relationship to certification.

LEGISLATION:

Legislative action in 1985 would be necessary to set the broad parameters for the revision of the regulations.

COST:

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEARS

YEAR	INCREASED COSTS OVER PRIOR YEAR	TOTAL INCREASED COSTS SINCE 1983-84
1984-85	$ 0	$ 0
1985-86	2,625,000	2,625,000
1986-87	126,000	2,751,000
1987-88	147,000	2,898,000

ISSUE: HOW TO IMPROVE THE RETENTION AND CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATORS

BACKGROUND:

The quality of education is inextricably linked to the commitment and dedication of its personnel. Low status, non-competitive salaries and lack of opportunity for advancement within the teaching profession are causing widespread dissatisfaction. Also, although it is universally agreed that educators should maintain their skills and grow as professionals throughout their careers, the overall picture in Connecticut shows a serious lack of consistency and commitment to professional development. (See Appendix A)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Connecticut school boards should enact specific policies to encourage the retention of quality teachers, including those options recommended by the Distinguished Citizens Task Force on Quality Teaching, i.e., summer work, flexible employment, benefit options and reduction of stressful conditions in schools.

Connecticut school districts should be required to plan and provide ongoing and systematic professional development for educators. Such plans should link staff development activities with the needs of students and the programs of schools.

The Department should establish and fund summer and school year institutes for educators, to be taught by exemplary Connecticut teachers and administrators, to serve as model programs of professional development.

A system should be established to enrich both business and education through cooperative arrangements, as was recommended by the Distinguished Citizens Task Force on Quality Teaching. The arrangements could include periodic employment for teachers in business positions and business people in classroom positions.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Local school districts would be required to submit professional development plans by the spring of 1985 for implementation in school year 1985-86. Summer institutes would begin in 1984.

LEGISLATION:

Legislative proposals concerning professional development plans and summer institutes would be submitted to the 1984 session of the General Assembly.

COST:

The costs of this proposal include a) plan development and implementation by local boards of education, and b) the development and implementation of summer institutes.

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEARS

YEAR	INCREASED COSTS OVER PRIOR YEAR	TOTAL INCREASED COSTS SINCE 1983-84
1984-85	$ 500,000	$ 500,000
1985-86	1,550,000	2,050,000
1986-87	2,360,000	4,410,000
1987-88	2,530,000	6,940,000

ISSUE: HOW TO ATTRACT THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST TO TEACHING

BACKGROUND:

The limited attraction to the teaching profession affects not only those already in the workforce but those entering it. Statistics show that the average student considering a job in the education field scores below average on standardized tests. It is essential that the teaching profession attract the best and the brightest students if we are to ensure the future of education in Connecticut. (See Appendix B)

RECOMMENDATION:

Establish a state academic scholarship loan program to recruit students who might otherwise not enter the teaching profession. Financial aid would be in the form of state scholarship loans to the top 25% of Connecticut's public and private school students who attend a four-year college and plan to major in an area consistent with a teaching career. Forgiveness of the loan would be made for five years of successful teaching service in Connecticut public schools. The loan would be in the amount of up to $5,000 per year.

IMPLEMENTATION:

1984-85	Development of recruitment and selection procedures.
1985-86	First year of scholarship loan program.

LEGISLATION:

A legislative proposal would be submitted to the 1984 session of the General Assembly.

COST:

The first year's costs cover the development of recruitment and selection procedures. Subsequent years' figures assume 100 new scholarships per year, attrition and increased loans beginning in 1987-88 (due to inflation).

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEARS

YEAR	INCREASED COSTS OVER PRIOR YEAR	TOTAL INCREASED COSTS SINCE 1983-84
1984-85	$ 80,000	$ 80,000
1985-86	519,000	599,000
1986-87	570,700	1,169,700
1987-88	626,427	1,796,127
1988-89	686,182	2,482,309
1989-90	749,964	3,232,273

ISSUE: HOW TO RAISE TEACHERS' SALARIES

BACKGROUND:

Salaries for teachers historically have been lower than for professionals of comparable training in other fields. This fact has contributed to what is now a gross disparity between the salaries of teachers and salaries of other professionals. Few would argue against the notion that the non-competitive starting salaries of teachers reduce the number of people who select teaching as a career. Low salaries also reduce the level of quality among those who do select teaching. This critical factor has caused many parents to cease advising, and students to cease choosing, a teaching career despite the many intangible rewards of the teaching profession.

Recent reports also have demonstrated that experienced teachers are leaving the classroom for more lucrative jobs at an alarming and increasing rate. Many of those leaving are among the most capable in the profession.

The conclusions to be drawn are clear. Teachers' starting and continuing salaries must be made competitive with those earned by persons with comparable skills and training in the private sector. It is easier to identify the problem than it is to develop a viable solution. No other issue currently facing education involves the complexities of balancing federal, state and local responsibilities for funding with the imperative to compensate teachers adequately.

RECOMMENDATION:

The State Board of Education should ask the Governor of the State of Connecticut to convene a citizens' commission charged with making specific recommendations concerning raising teachers' salaries. The commission should offer specific proposals as to public and private sources of revenue for funding such recommendations. As part of its work, the Commission should examine the recommendations of the Distinguished Citizens Task Force on Quality Teaching.

IMPLEMENTATION:

To be convened by 15 February 1984, the Commission should report its recommendations to the Governor and the State Board of Education by 1 September 1984.

LEGISLATION:

None is required at this time.

COST:

None at this time.

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INITIATIVE: ADDRESSING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ISSUE: HOW TO PROVIDE EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION PROGRAMS AT AN EARLIER AGE

BACKGROUND:

"The State Board of Education commits itself to the goal of ensuring that all of Connecticut's young children will have access to quality early learning experiences." This, as part of the Board's 1981 policy statement on early childhood education, sets the stage for the further development of services for Connecticut's youngest learners. The policy is rooted in the belief that an early investment in children will yield important benefits for later learning. (See Appendix C)

RECOMMENDATION:

Lower the age of compulsory school attendance from seven to five years of age.

This proposal is designed to ensure equity by requiring that education begin for all children at the age of five. The critical aspect of this proposal, as with other recommendations in this area, is that necessary program adjustments must be made to accommodate the differing needs of young children.

IMPLEMENTATION:

School year 1984-85.

LEGISLATION:

It would be necessary to amend the compulsory attendance law, as well as statutes related to the offering of programs to five year olds.

COST:

Estimates indicate that lowering the compulsory attendance age would increase attendance in kindergartens by about two percent, as most five-year olds are already in school programs. The impact would vary significantly from district to district. In some districts, increased enrollment could be absorbed into current space and staffing; in other districts, this may not be possible and costs would rise accordingly.

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEARS

YEAR	INCREASED COSTS OVER PRIOR YEAR	TOTAL INCREASED COSTS SINCE 1983-84
1984-85	$ 0	$ 0
1985-86	1,500,000	1,500,000
1986-87	70,000	1,570,000
1987-88	80,000	1,650,000

ISSUE: HOW TO GIVE OUR YOUNGEST LEARNERS A BETTER START

BACKGROUND:

Since 1967, the Connecticut General Statutes have mandated that school districts offer kindergarten programs of at least 2 1/2 hours a day for 180 days annually to children who attain the age of five by January 1 of the school year. Research data indicate that the early years of a child's life are critical for building a secure foundation for present and future learning. Early childhood education plays a role, not only in the social, emotional, and physical development of the child, but also in the development of critical cognitive skills. The experiences of children who enter kindergarten today are different from those of a decade ago due largely to the increase in the number of children who have attended pre-kindergarten programs (many full-day), from greater exposure to a variety of learning experiences, from technological advances both inside and outside the home and from changing family life styles. The traditional 2 1/2 hour kindergarten program can no longer provide for the diverse array of experiential backgrounds and for the broad range of developmental needs and abilities which children bring with them upon entry in school. The kindergarten program must provide for individualized and group instruction in ways which will address all aspects of every child's needs at her/his entry level into the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Extend the half-day (not less than 2 1/2 hours) kindergarten to a full-day (not less than four hours) kindergarten.

Require local school districts to provide program alternatives based on the assessment of the children's differing needs. These alternatives will include the offering of part-day programs for those students for whom extended programs are not appropriate.

Assist local school districts with establishing viable full-day kindergarten programs with creating program alternatives by: developing a kindergarten curriculum guide, identifying model programs, and providing technical assistance.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Implementation plans should be submitted by local school districts to the State Department of Education by 1 July 1985. Programs should commence no later than school year 1986-87.

LEGISLATION:

A legislative proposal would be submitted to the 1984 session of the General Assembly.

COST:

The annual fiscal impact of moving to full-day kindergarten is estimated to be approximately $20 million. While costs include program and staff development, materials and supplies, space and student transportation, they are predominantly made up of salaries of teacher and support staff. Neither space nor transportation should present major added costs. Most districts have space available presently; however, in any given building there may or may not be available or adequate space and costs would rise accordingly. These costs could be significant in some districts. Implementation in September of 1985 would provide districts with sufficient time to make necessary adjustments.

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEARS

YEAR	INCREASED COSTS OVER PRIOR YEAR	TOTAL INCREASED COSTS SINCE 1983-84
1984-85	$ 0	$ 0
1985-86	1,575,000	1,575,000
1986-87	19,425,000	21,000,000
1987-88	1,050,000	22,050,000

ISSUE: HOW EARLY DOES EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION BEGIN?

BACKGROUND:

Each September, children from varied pre-school programs begin kindergarten. Joining them are children who have not yet participated in group educational experiences. Providing services for four year olds is a way to help ensure positive initial school experiences for each child. The child's capacity for learning during the early childhood years is unequaled later in life. It is the prime time for developing positive attitudes toward learning and school. Developmental programming, parental involvement, intensive staff development and training can help make this happen.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Department should establish a committee to study the question of providing school programs for four-year olds.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The study committee should make specific recommendations in spring of 1985.

LEGISLATION:

None is required.

COST:

None at this time.

ISSUE: HOW TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS WHO POSSESS OR ARE AT RISK OF DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL HANDICAPS

BACKGROUND:

Although Connecticut law permits school districts to provide special education and related services to children of any age, services are not mandated until the school year in which the child turns three by January first. Services provided prior to age three, however, hold the promise of minimizing or eliminating certain effects of handicapping conditions, aiding the child's development and assisting the family in coping with the difficult task of raising a handicapped child. The goal is the reduction of concomitant educational problems which begin to manifest themselves in the early years of schooling.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Department should establish a committee to study whether services for handicapped infants and toddlers should be mandated. The committee should include a representative from the State Department of Mental Retardation.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The study committee should make specific recommendations in fall of 1984.

LEGISLATION:

None is required.

COST:

None at this time.

INITIATIVE: IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ASSISTANCE

ISSUE: HOW TO DETERMINE MASTERY OF SKILLS FROM PRIMARY GRADES TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Student outcomes are as important as equity of access. Statewide measurement of student performance provides the only means of assessing whether all our students are progressing and acquiring skills within a reasonable time frame.

BACKGROUND:

Currently, the only statewide testing program takes place in ninth grade. This test measures students' skills, assesses need for additional help and examines needs and disparities statewide. But too many of our students enter secondary school deficient in basic skills; for many, remediation comes too late. In order to provide for meaningful intervention, it is critical to target individual student and district needs at a stage well before the beginning of high school. Furthermore, our expectations for our students should go beyond minimum competency: we must look to mastery as our standard. (See Appendix D)

RECOMMENDATION:

Administer a statewide mastery test to all students in the early fall in the fourth, sixth and eighth grades to provide the means to assess whether they have acquired desired skills in reading, mathematics and language arts, including writing. Testing which is standardized statewide at three grade levels would permit teachers to provide remediation that is more likely to contribute to future success and allow school systems to make necessary program adjustments sooner. It would also focus attention on what learning outcomes can reasonably and rightfully be expected statewide in the fourth, sixth and eighth grades.

IMPLEMENTATION:

1983-84

Grade 4 Activities

Specification and validation of learning outcomes to be measured.

1984-85

Grade 4 Activities

Dissemination of learning outcomes, development of test items, piloting of test items, review of pilot data and establishment of the grade 4 mastery levels.

Grade 6 and 8 Activities

Specification, validation and dissemination of the grade 6 and grade 8 learning outcomes.

1985-86	Grade 4 Activities First administration of the grade 4 statewide test and dissemination of test results. Grade 6 and 8 Activities Development of test items, piloting of test items, review of pilot data and establishment of grade 6 and grade 8 mastery levels.
1986-87	Second administration of grade 4 test. First administration of grade 6 and grade 8 tests. Dissemination of test results for grades 4, 6 and 8.
1987-88	Test development (piloting and review of mastery standards) for revised grade 4 test. Administration of grade 4, grade 6 and grade 8 tests. Dissemination of test results for grades 4, 6 and 8.

LEGISLATION:

Legislation would be sought in 1984 to mandate participation in the test program. Since local boards of education are already required to do district-wide testing on a set schedule prior to the ninth grade test, it is recommended that participation in these tests replace the current requirement and leave additional testing as a local school district prerogative. Consideration should be given to maintaining the current ninth grade proficiency test until the eighth grade mastery test is administered. This will provide for a smooth transition from the current to the new testing system.

COST:

The cost of this proposal includes test development, test administration, scoring and reporting by the Department. $375,000 is included in the State Board's proposed budget for 1984-85. Annual costs of test administration at each grade level are estimated at approximately $200,000.

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEARS

YEAR	INCREASED COSTS OVER PRIOR YEAR	TOTAL INCREASED COSTS SINCE 1983-84
1984-85	$230,000	$230,000
1985-86	230,000	460,000
1986-87	230,000	690,000
1987-88	246,000	936,000

ISSUE: HOW TO ASSIST STUDENTS NEEDING EXTRA HELP TO REACH EXPECTED GOALS

BACKGROUND:

Schools should set high goals for students and expect students to reach them. But for those students who cannot meet goals within the expected time, additional provisions must be made. Many of this state's students will graduate or leave school without the basic skills needed to be effective workers, parents and citizens. Sadder yet, the stark truth is that this occurs with our knowledge. Students' needs go unmet not because we are unaware of them, but because sufficient resources are lacking and, often, resources are not used well.

A look at this state's schools shows that 20 to 25 percent of students, at any grade level, are deficient in basic skills. State and federal dollars support special programs for only a portion of those students. While remedial services are also provided within general education, it is clear that many of our students are simply not receiving the help they need. This fact raises the fundamental and challenging question of equity.

State funds for remedial education were cut from $7 million to $4.4 million during the 1982 legislative session.

It has become clear, through research and experience, that certain widely used approaches to remediation may not be producing the desired results. In fact, the disruptive effect of pulling students out of the classroom setting to give them "extra help" may in fact negate the potentially beneficial effects of the extra attention. The loss of continuity and classroom participation may simply contribute to the students' already diagnosed deficiencies.

It is essential that alternate approaches to remedial instruction be given serious consideration. The key to good remedial instruction is the same as that to good instruction: good teaching, good curriculum and staff development. Certain types of curricula and teaching styles appear to have a positive impact upon student achievement, facts which may radically alter the way both this Department and school districts should approach the concept of remediation. It is possible that funds directed toward professional development and curriculum revision may be the best, surest and most cost-effective way to ensure student achievement. (See Appendix E)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Compensatory Education Grant should be increased from $4.4 to $7 million. The legislation mandating remediation should be amended to target funds for those students most in need of assistance.

The Department should undertake to define remediation, review the many programs related to basic skills currently engaged in by the Department, review remedial practices statewide and develop a proposal concerning the best ways to integrate the most successful remedial approaches into current programs. *Standards (or cut-off points at which remediation must occur)* would also be reviewed. Pursuing a level of mastery will ensure a level of proficiency.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Grant increases are requested in the budget for 1984-85. Department activities would be initiated immediately.

LEGISLATION:

An amendment to current legislation would be necessary to target funds for the neediest students.

COST:

A $7 million appropriation (an increase of $2.6 million) has been requested for the Compensatory Education Grant in 1984-85. The cost impact of increasing remedial service levels (or funding changes to improve instruction) is difficult to estimate, as no reliable information is available to determine what level of additional services would be required. Further, information on what kinds of services are already being provided, other than under state and federal remedial programs, is not available.

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEARS

YEAR	INCREASED COSTS OVER PRIOR YEAR	TOTAL INCREASED COSTS SINCE 1983-84
1984-85	$2,600,000	$2,600,000
1985-86	130,000	2,730,000
1986-87	140,000	2,870,000
1987-88	140,000	3,010,000

ISSUE: HOW TO HELP SCHOOL DISTRICTS REACH EXPECTED GOALS

BACKGROUND:

As we set high expectations for our students, so must we set high goals for our districts. And, as with students, those districts with the greatest need should receive additional support. Certainly, equalized support for education has helped to address this issue, but disparity among programs remains great statewide. Serious questions exist about the ability of districts whose students may most need supplemental services to provide those services.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The institution of a new grant for priority school districts is recommended. The proposed budget for 1984-85 contains this request. This request is for $2 million to be directed toward those Connecticut school districts whose students have the greatest demonstrated academic need. At least ten and no more than twenty school districts would participate in the program. The grant would require expenditure plans to be worked out between the state and the towns, with emphasis on improving curriculum and staff. The grant would be the only such appropriation available to the state for selectively improving teaching of basic skills.

The allocation of $300,000 to be distributed to the Regional Education Service Centers is recommended. These funds (already in the proposed budget) are to be directed toward the improvement of instruction, primarily in the areas of math and science, with a focus upon services to districts where student need is high.

Finally, the time spent by Department staff in providing assistance to districts with severe needs must be increased. Professional services at the state level represent an important and cost-effective approach to providing expertise to those districts which cannot afford specialists in curriculum, staff development or special program areas. The 1984-85 budget request includes funds earmarked for two Department staff positions, one in the area of reading, the other in mathematics. The Department currently employs no reading specialist and only one mathematics specialist. As these two areas are critical as we attempt to improve the basic skills statewide, such expertise must be available at the state level. The Department's Effective Schools Program has proven what a difference professional support to schools can make in the lives of students. By disseminating research findings and promising practices, the Department can help school administrators allocate time and resources in effective ways.

IMPLEMENTATION:

School year 1984-85.

LEGISLATION:

Legislative action would be required to establish a priority school district grant system requiring categorical funding.

COST:

The initial cost of the Priority School District Grant is $2 million; the additional grant to Regional Education Service Centers is $300,000.

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEARS

YEAR	INCREASED COSTS OVER PRIOR YEAR	TOTAL INCREASED COSTS SINCE 1983-84
1984-85	$2,300,000	$2,300,000
1985-86	120,000	2,420,000
1986-87	120,000	2,540,000
1987-88	130,000	2,670,000

INITIATIVE: SETTING HIGHER STANDARDS

ISSUE: HOW TO ENSURE DEPTH AND DIVERSITY OF SCHOLASTIC BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND:

To raise performance levels of students, we must also raise standards. As in many other states, it has become clear that in Connecticut, the assurance that all high school graduates have had adequate preparation in those areas universally deemed important can come only through statewide graduation requirements. The establishment of graduation requirements is a critical component of the raising of standards at the high school level. Connecticut never had a statewide graduation requirement prior to the 1983 session of the General Assembly, and the recently established mandate requires only a minimum of eighteen credits (a credit is defined as a forty-minute class period for every day of the school year) beginning with the class graduating in 1987. A survey completed in May of 1983 shows that only two high schools in the state had to increase current requirements (by one credit) to meet the new mandate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the following graduation requirements be mandated beginning with the class of 1988.

Increase the number of credits required to 20.

Change the definition of "credit" to require a forty-five minute class period (rather than the current forty).

Require courses as follows:

English - 4 credits
Mathematics - 3 credits
Social Studies - 3 credits
Science - 2 credits
The Arts- 1 credit
Physical Education - 1 credit
Elective Areas - 6 credits

It is further recommended that an advisory panel be established by the State Board of Education to review graduation requirements in a broader context. Areas to be addressed would include:

a. More specific subject matter requirements (such as foreign languages, computers, writing, or an additional year of science.)

b. Differentiated diplomas.

c. Increased credit requirements.

d. The advisability of a test requirement, such as a statewide mastery test for graduation.

e. A review of mandated program offerings, as explained on page 27 of this document.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Changes in the mandate should be scheduled to begin with the class entering in September, 1984 and graduating in 1988, provided that the new definition of "credit" should become effective in September, 1985. The advisory panel would be convened in winter of 1984; a report would be due in fall of 1984.

LEGISLATION:

Legislative action would be required to mandate specific graduation requirements and to redefine "credit".

COST:

Full implementation of these recommendations, over four years, would cost approximately $3.5 million. While the changes would have an impact upon many districts, the impact would vary significantly from district to district, based upon such factors as existing local requirements and offerings, space in existing classes, available staff and the impact of declining enrollments on class loads and offerings.

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEARS

YEAR	INCREASED COSTS OVER PRIOR YEAR	TOTAL INCREASED COSTS SINCE 1983-84
1984-85	$750,000	$750,000
1985-86	830,000	1,580,000
1986-87	930,000	2,510,000
1987-88	960,000	3,470,000

ISSUE: HOW TO GUARANTEE A BREADTH OF SUBJECT OFFERINGS

BACKGROUND:

As enrollments decline, it becomes more and more difficult for many districts to provide a meaningful range of offerings for students. At the same time, our world, and our knowledge base, is expanding. Section 10-16b of the Connecticut General Statutes currently mandates that public schools must offer a program of instruction which includes the arts, career education, consumer education, health and safety, language arts (including reading, writing, grammar, speaking and spelling), mathematics, physical education, science, social studies (including citizenship, economics, geography, government and history) and, in addition, on at least the secondary level, one or more foreign languages and vocational education.

RECOMMENDATION:

The advisory panel established to review graduation requirements should also consider the following:

(a) the appropriateness of the currently prescribed curriculum areas,
(b) whether all areas should be given equal weight,
(c) whether the distinction between elementary and secondary requirements is appropriately drawn, and
(d) whether specific time allocations should be included for certain subject areas.

IMPLEMENTATION:

A study committee would report in the fall of 1984.

LEGISLATION:

None is required.

COST:

None.

ISSUE: HOW TO PROMOTE POLICIES THAT SUPPORT LEARNING

BACKGROUND:

Learning is hard work. It demands time and commitment on the part of the learner, as well as an environment supportive of the endeavor. It goes on before, during and after the school day.

Students must understand these essentials of scholastic life. To teach children and young adults to become responsible for their own environment and their own success, adults must provide a structure that makes clear both standards and expectations. This structure must go beyond the walls of the classroom to include the school as a whole and the homes in which students live and study.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is proposed that each local board of education be required to develop and adopt policies concerning homework, attendance, and promotion and retention.

The Department of Education should review current practice and make available model policies for use by local boards. The Department should also provide assistance and training for local boards of education who wish to review and/or revise their existing policies concerning student discipline (currently required by state law). A sound, well-publicized and evenly enforced code of conduct is the cornerstone of school discipline.

IMPLEMENTATION:

This requirement would become effective in school year 1984-85. As many local boards already have such policies in place, the impact of the mandate should not be significant.

LEGISLATION:

A legislative proposal would be submitted to the 1984 session of the General Assembly.

COST:

None.

INITIATIVE: INCREASING TIME

ISSUE: HOW MUCH TIME IS ENOUGH?

BACKGROUND:

Recent debate concerning educational reform has invited comparison of this country's public school system with those of other nations. American students spend considerably less time in school than do their counterparts internationally, a fact that may in time put our nation at a distinct disadvantage. As we move toward the 21st century, not only has our society changed but we have also seen a steady increase in the amount of knowledge students must acquire to lead productive lives. The fact is that it takes more time to absorb more knowledge.

It is also clear that the needs of teachers have changed. To remain current in their subject areas, to develop their teaching skills, to evaluate and update curriculum and to assess student needs and adjust programs accordingly, teachers must have more time available when students are not present.

Additional learning can be achieved with better use of time within the existing school day and year. Measures must be taken, however, to ensure that important activities such as professional development and program preparation do not encroach upon classroom time. Providing additional time for teachers' activities would be a significant step in enhancing instructional time for students.

RECOMMENDATION:

Extend the school year for teachers to 190 days.

RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS: (See earlier recommendations.)

Increase credit requirements for high school graduation.

Increase time per credit requirements.

Specify course requirements for high school graduation.

Require local districts to develop and enforce homework, attendance and promotion/retention policies.

Review Section 10-16b concerning mandated areas of instruction; consider specific time allocations for certain subject areas.

Encourage school districts to evaluate the amount of actual learning time in existing local programs, and to adjust such time as needed.

Require school districts to develop plans for professional development which include provisions for relating staff development activities to the needs of students and school programs.

IMPLEMENTATION:

	Teacher Days	Student Days
1985	Legislation	
1985-1986	180	180
1986-1987	190	180

The recommended timeline is designed to provide sufficient time for the following. First, a fiscal mechanism must be developed to implement the proposal. Second, the impact upon the Guaranteed Tax Base (GTB) formula has not yet been assessed; consideration by the Equity Study Committee may well be necessary. Third, the timeline gives more than adequate notice to local boards of education to provide for changes in programs and concomitant adjustments in collective bargaining agreements. Finally, the timeline provides the Department and local districts with over 2 1/2 years to implement proposed changes designed to strengthen the use of time within the current school day (see "Related Recommendations", previous page).

LEGISLATION:

A legislative proposal would be submitted to the 1985 session of the General Assembly.

COST:

Estimates of the cost of the longer school year include (a) teacher and support staff salaries, (b) some administrative, clerical and maintenance staff salaries, (c) building operation and maintenance, and (d) program and staff development. The estimated cost, in today's dollar, is approximately $115 million, which includes costs in the Vocational-Technical Schools. By year, with an inflation projection, cost estimates are:

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEARS

YEAR	INCREASED COSTS OVER PRIOR YEAR	TOTAL INCREASED COSTS SINCE 1983-84
1984-85	$ 0	$ 0
1985-86	0	0
1986-87	58,560,000	58,560,000
1987-88	2,930,000	61,490,000

INITIATIVE: EXAMINING THE DELIVERY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICES

ISSUE: HOW TO ENSURE THAT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS RECEIVE THE SAME KIND OF REVIEW AND ATTENTION THAT TRADITIONAL ACADEMIC AREAS ARE CURRENTLY RECEIVING

BACKGROUND:

The State Board of Education will shortly submit a revised Master Plan for Vocational, Career and Adult Education to the General Assembly. As this Department prepares to pursue the goals and objectives set forth in the Plan, careful consideration must be given to the respective roles of the vocational-technical schools, comprehensive high schools, postsecondary occupational schools, and institutions of higher education in providing vocational programs for Connecticut youth and adults.

RECOMMENDATION:

A study of the delivery of vocational education services should be undertaken. This study should include, but not be limited to, the grade structure, organization and governance of the state's system of vocational-technical schools should be considered, as should the system's relationship to vocational programs provided in local high schools and higher education institutions.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Specific recommendations would be presented to the State Board of Education in April, 1985.

LEGISLATION:

None is required.

COST:

None at this time.

INITIATIVE: ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULTS

ISSUE: HOW TO INCREASE ADULT LITERACY AND ALLOW VOCATIONAL TRAINING TO ADDRESS THE CHANGING JOB MARKET

BACKGROUND:

Economic, labor and demographic projections all point to the rapidly increasing importance of adult education. Unless Connecticut can offer a workforce with the skills demanded by today's - and tomorrow's - business and industry, our state will lose its competitive advantage. The median age of the population will change from 31 in 1981 to 38 by the year 2000; the largest population increase will be in the 35-54 age group, the sharpest decrease in the group age 16-24. It is clear that the retraining needs of the workforce will increase significantly. At the same time, 1980 census data indicates that 642,000 adults, or nearly 30% of Connecticut's adult population, do not have a high school diploma. It is time that Connecticut devote more energy and resources to the educational needs of its adult population in the areas of basic literacy, skill training and retraining.

RECOMMENDATION:

A study committee to review the status of adult education should be convened. The study should include specific recommendations concerning both program and funding matters.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The report and recommendations should be forthcoming in April, 1985.

LEGISLATION:

None is required.

COST:

None at this time.

INITIATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION	LEGISLATION	BOARD ACTION ONLY
IMPROVING TEACHING	Adopt the set of procedures and standards recommended by the Committee on the Revision of Procedures and Standards for teacher preparation programs.	Phase-in from 1984 through 1985		X
	Adopt, as modified by the State Board of Education, the recommendations of the Certification Advisory Council and amend Connecticut's Teacher Certification Regulations.	Subject to legislation	X	
	Connecticut school boards should enact specific policies to encourage the retention of quality teachers.			X
	Connecticut school districts should be required to plan and provide ongoing and systematic professional development for educators. Such plans should include provisions for linking staff development activities with the needs of students and the programs of schools.	Planning in School year 1984-85 Implementation in 1985-86	X	
	The Department should establish and fund summer and school year institutes for educators, to be taught by exemplary Connecticut teachers and administrators, to serve as model programs of professional development.	Summer, 1984	X	

INITIATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION	LEGISLATION	BOARD ACTION ONLY
IMPROVING TEACHING (Continued)	A statewide system of cooperative efforts between business and education should be established to enrich public school curriculum and to provide increased opportunities for the co-employment of educators by the corporate sector and education.			
	Establish a state academic scholarship loan program to recruit students who might not otherwise enter the teaching profession.	1984-85 - Development 1985-86 - First year of program.	X	
	The State Board of Education should ask the Governor to convene a citizens' commission charged with making specific recommendations concerning raising teachers' salaries. The commission should examine appropriate funding sources.	Convene - February, 1984 Report - September, 1984		X
ADDRESSING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	Lower the age of compulsory school attendance from seven to five years of age.	School year 1984-85	X	
	Extend the half-day (not less than 2 1/2 hours) kindergarten to a full-day (not less than four hours) kindergarten.	Planning in 1985 School year 1986-87	X	
	Require local school districts to provide program alternatives based on the assessment of children's differing needs.	School year in 1986-87	X	

INITIATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION	LEGISLATION	BOARD ACTION ONLY
	Assist local school districts with establishing viable full-day kindergarten programs and with creating program alternatives by: developing a kindergarten curriculum guide, identifying model programs, and providing technical assistance.	Beginning school year 1984-85 Ongoing		
	The Department should establish a committee to study the question of providing school programs for four-year olds.	Recommendations due in spring, 1985		X
	The Department should establish a committee to study whether services for handicapped infants and toddlers should be mandated.	Recommendations due in fall, 1984.		X
IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ASSISTANCE	A statewide mastery test should be administered to students in the fourth, sixth and eighth grades.	Test development - School years 1984-86 Test administration - (Fourth) 1985-86 (Sixth/Eighth) 1986-87	X	
	Increase the Compensatory Education Grant from $4.4 to $7 million.	School year 1984-85		(Included in 1984-85 budget request)
	Amend the legislation which mandates remedial services to target funds to to students most in need of assistance.	School year - 1984-85	X	
	Examine the whole area of remedial assistance, including its definition, standards and programs.	Report due in fall 1984		X
	Target $2 million to assist priority school districts to improve their students' basic skills.	School year 1984-85	X	(Included in 1984-85 budget request)

INITIATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION	LEGISLATION	BOARD ACTION ONLY
IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ASSISTANCE (Continued)	Increase funding to the Regional Education Service Centers by $300,000 to work with local school districts to improve instruction, primarily in the areas of science and mathematics.	School year 1984-85		(Included in 1984-85 budget request)
	Add two curriculum consultants to the Department's staff -- one in reading and one in mathematics.	School year 1984-85		(Included in 1984-85 budget request)
SETTING HIGHER STANDARDS	Increase to 20 the number of credits required for high school graduation.	School year 1984-85 - Effective for the graduating class of 1988.	X	
	Change the definition of "credit" to require a forty-five minute class period (rather than the current forty).	School year 1985-86	X	
	Specify credits required for high school graduation as follows: English-4 credits; Mathematics-3 credits; Social Studies-3 credits; Science-2 credits; The Arts-1 credit; Physical Education-1 credit; Elective Areas-6 credits.	School year 1984-85 - Effective for the graduating class of 1988.	X	
	Establish an advisory panel to review graduation requirements and address the following areas:	Report due in fall, 1984.		X
	a. More specific subject matter requirements (such as foreign languages, computers, writing, or an additional year of science.)		X	
	b. Differentiated diplomas.			
	c. Increased credit requirements.			
	d. The advisability of a test requirement, such as a statewide mastery test for graduation.			
	e. Mandated program offerings.			

INITIATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION	LEGISLATION	BOARD ACTION ONLY
SETTING HIGHER STANDARDS (Continued)	Review the requirements of Section 10-16b, including consideration of (a) the appropriateness of the currently prescribed curriculum areas, (b) whether all areas should be given equal weight, (c) whether the distinction between elementary and secondary requirements is appropriately drawn, and (d) whether specific time allocations should be included for certain subject areas.	Report due in fall, 1984 as part of the report on graduation requirements.		X
	Require local boards of education to develop and adopt policies concerning homework, attendance, and promotion and retention.	School year 1984-85	X	
	Assist local boards who wish to review or revise their policies concerning student discipline.	School year 1984-85		
INCREASING TIME	Extend the school year for teachers to 190 days.	School year 1986-87	X	
EXAMINING THE DELIVERY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICES	Conduct a study of the delivery of vocational education services. The grade structure, organization and governance of the state's system of vocational-technical schools should be considered as should the system's relationship to vocational programs provided in local high schools and higher education institutions.	Report and recommendations due in April, 1985.		X
ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULTS	Conduct a study of adult education in Connecticut and make recommendations concerning both program and funding matters.	Report and recommendations due April, 1985.		X

SUMMARY COST TABLE

Annual Cost Increases (in millions)(a)

	1984-1985	1985-1986	1986-1987	1987-1988	Increased costs 1983-1984 to 1987-1988
Improving Teaching(b)	1.58	4.74	3.11	3.37	12.80
Addressing Early Childhood Education(c)	0	3.08	19.50	1.13	23.71
Improving Educational Assessment and Assistance(d)	5.13	.48	.49	.52	6.62
Setting Higher Standards(c)	.75	.83	.93	.96	3.47
Increasing Time(c)	0	0	58.56	2.93	61.49
TOTAL IN BUDGET	7.46	9.13	82.59	8.91	108.09

(a) Assumes 5% yearly inflation rate, except for 10% rate used to calculate costs for Mastery Test program.
(b) These costs include several programs, some of which will be supported by state and local sources, and others totally funded by the state.
(c) The expenditures will be incurred at the local level, but will be reimbursed by the state on a current basis and based on a town's ability to pay, with the state share at 50 percent of the total cost.
(d) These costs include only state expenditures and are included in the State Board of Education proposed budget for 1984-85.